

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00  
INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03  
NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 MCT-01 /061 W  
-----118726 221828Z /53

O 221730Z FEB 78  
FM AMEMBASSY NICOSIA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7312  
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY ATHENS  
AMEMBASSY ANKARA  
AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NICOSIA 0496

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PGOV, CY, EG  
SUBJECT: GOC EXPLANATION OF LARNACA AIRPORT INCIDENT

BEGIN SUMMARY. FONMIN DIRGEN PELAGHIAS CALLED IN DCM FEB. 22  
TO PRESENT GOC PORTRAYAL OF EVENTS AT LARNACA AIRPORT  
FEB. 19. GOC SAYS ENTIRE BLAME FOR INCIDENT RESTS WITH GOE.  
AT SAME TIME, GOC WOULD LIKE U.S. TO TELL EGYPTIANS THAT GOC  
HOPES TO RESTORE FRIENDLY RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. PELAGHIAS BEGAN CONVERSATION BY SAYING GOC NEVER  
UNDERSTOOD GOE WAS SENDING STRIKE FORCE TO CYPRUS. HE  
HAD BEEN PRESENT WHEN PRESIDENT KYPRIANOU TELEPHONED PRESIDENT  
SADAT. KYPRIANOU HAD ASSURED SADAT THAT GOC PRIORITY WAS TO  
FREE HOSTAGES IN SAFETY AND "TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR (SADAT'S)  
CONCERNS" ABOUT THE TERRORISTS. SADAT HAD RESPONDED THAT HE  
HAD COMPLETE CONFIDENCE IN KYPRIANOU AND WOULD ACCEPT  
KYPRIANOU'S ACTIONS IN DEALING WITH THE SITUATION.

2. EGYPTIAN C-130 AIRCRAFT ARRIVED AND IT BECAME  
APPARENT THERE WERE TROOPS ABOARD, KYPRIANOU SENT  
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POLICE CHIEF TO TELL EGYPTIAN COMMANDER NOT TO TAKE ANY  
ACTION WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM GOC. (ACCORDING TO  
PELAGHIAS, EGYPTIANS LATER SAID THE TERM "MINISTER OF  
CULTURE", THE PERSON SUPPOSED TO BE ON THE PLANE, WAS A  
CODE WORD FOR A COMMANDO FORCE. PELAGHIAS SAID IT WAS  
TOO BAD THAT GOC DID NOT KNOW THE CODE.) KYPRIANOU  
CONSIDERED POSSIBILITY OF STATIONING ARMORED CARS AND

APC'S AROUND C-130 TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT EGYPTIANS SHOULD NOT TAKE ACTION, BUT DECIDED IT WOULD BE DISCOURTEOUS TO DO SO. (PELAGHIAS SAID THAT ON REFLECTION HE WAS SORRY KYPRIANOU HAD NOT SENT HEAVY EQUIPMENT TO DISSUADE EGYPTIANS FROM TAKING ACTION.)

3. EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR SHASH, SAID PELAGHIAS, HAD GIVEN PRESIDENT KYPRIANOU HIS WORD THAT EGYPTIANS WOULD NOT TAKE ACTION WHILE NEGOTIATIONS WITH TERRORISTS PROCEEDING. WHEN EGYPTIANS DID MOVE OUT KYPRIANOU FELT HE HAD BEEN BETRAYED BY SHASH; THAT AMBASSADOR HAD BROKEN HIS WORD. THIS WAS REINFORCED BY THE FACT THAT EGYPTIAN MILITARY ATTACHE TAKKY, WHO HAD BEEN IN CONSULTATION WITH SHASH, WENT TO EGYPTIAN C-130 ABOUT FIVE MINUTES BEFORE ATTACK TOOK PLACE. THUS IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT ATTACK HAD PROCEEDED ON TAKKY'S ORDERS AND NOT THOSE OF SHASH HIMSELF.

4. EVEN WITH PROVOCATION OF JEEP MOVEMENT TOWARD AIRCRAFT AND EGYPTIAN SOLDIERS FIRING AT AIRCRAFT, GOC MIGHT NOT HAVE RESPONDED IF EGYPTIANS HAD NOT FIRED AT TERMINAL BUILDING AND THE TOWER WHERE THEY KNEW PRESIDENT KYPRIANOU WAS. THUS IT BECAME IMPERATIVE TO ORDER CYPRIOT NATIONAL GUARD TO RETURN FIRE.

5. DCM QUERIED PELAGHIAS ABOUT THE REPORT THAT GOC WAS PREPARING PASSPORTS FOR TERRORISTS; WAS IT NOT POSSIBLE THAT  
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EGYPTIANS THOUGHT THIS WAS INDICATION GOC WAS PREPARING TO RELEASE TERRORISTS? PELAGHIAS SAID THIS WAS NOT SO. IT WAS MADE VERY CLEAR TO AMBASSADOR SHASH THAT PASSPORT EXERCISE WAS MERELY A LURE TO GET GUNMEN TO SURRENDER THEMSELVES. APPROPRIATE JUDICIAL MEASURES WOULD HAVE BEEN TAKEN ONCE THIS WAS ACCOMPLISHED. IN FACT, PELAGHIAS SAID, THE GUNMEN HAD ALREADY SURRENDERED THEIR WEAPONS TO THE PILOT OF THE AIRCRAFT BEFORE THE EGYPTIAN ATTACK TOOK PLACE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NICOSIA 0496

6. IN SUM, PELAGHIAS ASSERTED, THE ENTIRE BLAME FOR TRAGIC EVENT RESTS WITH GOE. THE EGYPTIANS VIOLATED THE SOVEREIGNTY OF CYPRUS; SENT TROOPS WITHOUT INFORMING GOC; DISOBEYED A DIRECT ORDER NOT TO TAKE ACTION, AND JEOPARDIZED LIVES OF HOSTAGES, GOC OFFICIALS AND HUNDREDS OF OTHER PERSONS IN THE TERMINAL BUILDING.

7. DESPITE THIS, GOC HOPES THAT GOE/GOC RELATIONSHIP CAN BE RESTORED TO FORMER FRIENDLY LEVEL. PELAGHIAS ASKED U.S. TO MAKE THIS POINT WITH GOE IN CAIRO. GOC BELIEVES APPROACH TO RESUMPTION OF GOOD RELATIONS WOULD BE FOR BOTH COUNTRIES TO WITHDRAW THEIR AMBASSADORS, NOT MISSIONS, LEAVE EMBASSIES WITH CHARGES D'AFFAIRES AND AFTER SOME INTERVAL SEND NEW AMBASSADORS.

8. DCM ASKED PELAGHIAS ABOUT THE REPORTED PLO GROUP WHICH WAS PRESENT AT THE INCIDENT. IT HAD BEEN SAID THAT AS MANY AS 12 PLO WERE PRESENT AND ACCORDING SOME REPORTS THEY HAD BEEN ARMED AND TAKEN PART IN THE ACTION. PELAGHIAS SAID GOC HAD ASKED PLO LEADER ARAFAT TO SEND PERSONS TO ASSIST IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH TERRORISTS  
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ON FEB. 18. BECAUSE NO ONE WAS SURE OF AFFILIATION OF TERRORISTS, IT WAS NECESSARY TO SEND TWO OR THREE PEOPLE FROM EACH OF THE SEVERAL PLO FACTIONS. THIS ACCOUNTS FOR THE GROUP OF ABOUT A DOZEN. THEY WERE OF GREAT ASSISTANCE TO GOC IN NEGOTIATIONS, BUT TOOK NO PART IN THE INCIDENT WITH THE EGYPTIAN STRIKE FORCE.

9. COMMENT: PELAGHIAS' STATEMENT DOES NOT JIBE ON MANY POINTS WITH REPORTS WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM OTHER SOURCES, AND WHICH WE CONSIDER RELIABLE. FOR EXAMPLE, ACCORDING MOST VERSIONS THE TERRORISTS SURRENDERED THEIR WEAPONS TO CYPRUS AIRWAYS PILOTS AFTER THE SHOOTING INCIDENT, NOT BEFORE.

OUR OWM EMBOFFS OBSERVED ARMED, ARABIC-SPEAKING PERSONNEL WHO  
WERE IDENTIFIED BY POLICE SOURCES AS PLO. GOC STATEMENT THAT  
IT WAS NOT INFORMED ABOUT PRESENCE  
OF TROOPS ON PLANE AND THAT IT  
GAVE DIRECT ORDER TO EGYPTIANS NOT TO AKE ACTION PROBABLY  
IS CORRECT.

10. WE RECOMMEND AGAINST ACTING ON GOC REQUEST FOR C.S.  
INVOLVEMENT WITH GOE. THERE ARE ENOUGH QUESTION MARKS  
ON THE PERFORMANCE OF BOTH SIDES IN THIS AFFAIR TO MAKE  
IT PREFERABLE THAT U.S. STAY UNINVOLVED.  
CRAWFORD

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## Message Attributes

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